3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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Taxes were heavy

and work strenuous; but there were a sound currency, commercial and agricultural prosperity, and a full treasury.

Like many a great man he was an overweening egotist. His energy and ambition, for Haiti as well as for himself, neither understood nor tolerated a lesser determination than his own. At times he seemed more intent upon the letter than upon the spirit of his laws. Probably his chief defect, a common failing of strong men, was a disregard for humble individual worth. To write of him invites the most colorful vocabulary. He is Black Majesty and the Emperor Jones. By almost any standards of leadership he would be accounted a great man. He lacked only those few final, subtle qualities which make for sheer genius. In 1820, stricken by paralysis and faced with defections in his army, he died as he had lived, dramatically, ending his life with a specially saved bullet (folklore says a silver one), in his palace of the ironic name, Sans Souci.

In no significant respect did Christophe change the feudal structure of economic organization begun by Toussaint and carried on by Dessalines. It was in administration, especially as it affected social status, that the thirteen years of Christophe were important for the future of Haiti. Where the Emperor had been an unpredictable tyrant whose heavy hand inspired only terror, Christophe was a sternly just father whose well-disciplined children respected, admired, and even loved him.

The land policy of the two régimes was similar. Government estates were farmed out on five-year leases to the highest bidders among the well-to-do; large plantations belonging to the state were tilled by cultivators who might, without taking the term too harshly, be called serfs; loyal supporters and wealthy individuals were entrusted with responsibility. Like Dessalines, Christophe added wealth to power and rendered all his subjects dependent upon himself rather than on their own resources and influence—but all this with a difference.

Where the Emperor had denied the natural vanity of his aides by refusing them nobility, Christophe accepted their ambition as perfectly normal and made use of it for his own purposes. Four years after he had established his state, he changed it from a republic to a kingdom; all his important men he made dukes, barons, counts, knights. He warned them that he would expect them to live up to the dignities conferred upon them. Pomp and regalia are costly;

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policy of encouraging trade with his friends and prohibiting it with his enemies—both arbitrarily. The variation of Pétion was a sort of mercantilism, with set high tariffs.

What Dessalines planned was in terms of Western statecraft so weird that white onlookers felt they were restrained in calling Dessalines a transplanted African tribal chieftain. So passionately intense was the fury of that general against all whites that he took every precaution he could devise to prevent face-to-face dealings between his Haitians and foreigners. By deceit, treachery, and ingenious cruelty he conducted a massacre which deserves comparison with that of Saint Bartholomew: this effectively rid the country of white residents. Since for a time Haiti would have to depend for economic survival upon trade with foreigners, Dessalines next conceived a project whereby the whole population would be gathered in the centre of the island, in the most protected valleys and the gorges of the highest mountains. In these fastnesses the people would never see a white but would work on the land, producing sugar and coffee and cotton for export without ever leaving their local habitations. On the seacoast would be established certain "counters" over which a few incorruptible Haitians, chosen by the Emperor himself, would sell local products and buy the necessary imported goods. Impregnable fortresses were to guard access to the interior,[a] which would be reached by new roads from the seacoast "counters." Every seaport was to be destroyed as soon as new towns could be built in the back country. Already when his death intervened Dessalines had moved his capital from the Cape (that is, Cap-Haïtien, formerly Cap Français) to the inland village of Marchand (in the department of the Artibonite; now renamed Dessalines), and his next plan was to transfer Port-au-Prince eight leagues inland to the plantation Dérance, among the mountains.

Dessalines has been thought absurd, childish, barbaric. But there is something poignant, even tragic, in this fiery determination of the black chieftain, bitter over the cruelties and indignity to which his people had been subject for decades, to use this alien island as best he could and preserve his people at any cost from such another domination.

Despite his scheme for ultimate isolation of the people, Dessalines kept everyone steadily at work by the forced-labor system instituted

a. See p. 247 and note 23. under Toussaint.